

How to describe skills in your CV

Make your CV stand out to employers by showing them your skills and how you've used them.

Figure out your skills

If you're not sure what your skills are, your first step is to identify them. You gain skills from life experiences, such as paid and unpaid jobs, interests, hobbies, playing sport, belonging to organisations or school.

Identify skills employers want

To find out what skills employers are looking for, you can:

- ask employers directly
- read job adverts carefully
- learn about employability skills.

Employability skills are seven personal skills or attitudes employers say are essential for their workplaces. Top 5 skills listed in job adverts



You can get the top five skills listed in job adverts from everyday life, not just work experience.

Compare your skills to what employers want

When you read an advert, list the skills it mentions. When you know what skills employers are looking for, compare your skills to these. Assess your ability in each skill as accurately as you can. Ask yourself if you have used this skill a little or a lot.

For each skill, write a sentence showing how you've used that skill. Then write a sentence showing how you could use that skill in the job you would like.

What skills should I put in my CV?

The skills in your CV should include skills from the adverts that interest you.

Look at this example:

"We're looking for a conscientious self-starter, proficient in Microsoft Office and Adobe Photoshop, who works well with others and can learn new computer systems easily."

The key words are ... conscientious, self-starter, proficient in Microsoft Office and Adobe Photoshop, teamwork and willingness to learn.

Show how you used skills

For each skill on your CV, include an example that shows how you used or developed it.

You could write:

Conscientious ... I collected and managed money from my school's 40 Hour Famine fundraiser.

Self-starter ... Ran a coffee kiosk. Managed and counted the till takings, opened and closed kiosk.

Teamwork Worked with the school trustees to make decisions about school issues. I played netball on a school team for four years and was captain in Year 13.

Willingness to learn ... I updated my Microsoft skills (Excel and Word) through online courses.

Make your experience stand out by choosing strong words

When you write your examples ... use 'action' words such as achieved, awarded, organised, led, assisted, managed, increased, developed, built or won

Use positive words to describe yourself and your achievements such as accurate, willing to learn, organised, hardworking, dependable, motivated or creative.

Writing your CV can prepare you for an interview

As well as helping you write a stronger CV, writing about your experiences will prepare you to talk about them if you get a job interview.

Find out more

[Employability skills are the heart of the future](#)
[CV builder - build a CV with our easy-to-use tool](#)
[How to write a CV](#)
[Contact us for career help](#)